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The Tragic Story of Oscar Wilde's Life

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FOREWORD.

To that valiant knight, Stewart Duckworth Headlam, this little book should be dedicated, because, when the storm broke, when those who had been recipients of Wilde's favor and generosity turned from him and denied him, reviled him and spat upon him at the first breath of suspicion, Headlam almost alone stepped forward and placed his talents and his resources at the luckless man's feet. For Stewart D. Headlam was a man bigger than the church he adorned, and one who deemed it far from wise to break the loom because there were black threads as well as gold in the tapestry. If, he held, Wilde had done things unseemly, had indeed bartered lust for glory, it were unwise and unseemly for those whose sins of self-indulgence were uncloaked, to launch him into a sea of torment, his punishment being involved in his conduct. Headlam's point of view may have been right and may have been wrong. At any rate, right or wrong, he was certainly on safe ground when he declared with Nietzsche that men were most to be feared when the word "justice" was in their mouths.

I.

CALIBAN OR ARIEL?

And even the light of the sun will fade at the last,
And the leaves will fall, and the birds will hasten away,
And I will be left in the snow of a flowerless day
To think on the glories of Spring, and the joys of a youth long past.

—Magdalen Walks.

Investigation is laborious and unexciting, and it requires no great stretch of imagination to picture a group of painstaking and solemn men some hundreds of years hence, vainly trying to reconstruct the Wilde figure. Indeed, it is not an altogether fanciful notion that there may, in far time to come, be those who, seeing the strangeness of the story, will set down the whole Wilde legend as a myth, a kind of sun myth perhaps, with the man in his glory and surrounded by his admiring satellites, conceived to be the sun at its zenith; the swift darkness that enfolded him in later life may appear as an eclipse; his brilliant conversation may be taken to typify the solar activity on sullen soil. Certainly, theories have been based on far less attractive foundations.

At any rate, looking through the bulky literature that has grown up about Oscar Wilde, reading and noting him here deified,

there denounced and blackened, his writings praised by this one as the *ne plus ultra* and treated as quite negligible by that; the widely differing estimates placed upon his art by Robert Ross on the one hand and by James Gibbons Huneker on the other, to take but two examples: the variance in the word pictures of him and the biographies that are poles apart —Ransome, Sherard, Douglas, Harris, Ingledy, Andre Gide: more than all, the startling differences in the pictorial representations of the man, for that item must certainly be considered—taking into consideration all these things, the students of some hundreds of years hence may well be imagined as standing puzzled and finding their work of investigation as I have said, both laborious and unexciting. Nor are the various estimates and images mutually exclusive and all may be to some extent true. None of them is complete. They are all aspects partly true and partly false, yet, as conceived by any individual, true as far as they go.

Take the pictorial representations, the photographs and engravings first. They are numerous, especially in the ten years of his heyday, for Wilde was a persistent self-advertiser. There is the well-known picture of Wilde the exquisite and dandy, the man in silk-lined frock coat and waved hair, with face of great beauty; the etching made by J. E. Kelley during Wilde's American tour, showing him with long, curling hair, shoulder length, and a profile like a Greek god; the Sphinx face as on the tomb with heavy lidded eyes and sensual

mouth; the comparatively rare picture of Wilde as a child of striking feminine aspect; Wilde as a youth, rather goggle eyed and certainly asymmetrical about the upper part of the face, the eyes especially; Wilde glorious in the Ellis and Wallery picture, a man beautiful as Apollo and full of spirituality; Wilde at the age of twenty-seven all becloaked like a brigand in an Italian opera; Wilde with Lord Alfred Douglas taken when the moral fibre of the man had grown weak, Wilde fat, and posing with foot on chair, cigarette in hand and hand on hip, bowler hat well displayed, with Douglas in white trousers, a youth with a most decidedly effeminate cast of countenance. But most startling in its truth, it seems to me, is the sketch of Oscar Wilde as made by Aubrey Beardsley. It is very like the recorded impression as given by that outspoken diarist, Wilfred Scawen Blunt: "physically he (Wilde) was repellant, though with a certain sort of fat good looks. There was a kind of freckled coarseness in his coloring."

In the Beardsley sketch there is both cruelty and truth, and of all the pictures it best brings to mind the man as I saw him. It was at the opening of an Arts and Crafts exhibition in 1889, a notable gathering where were many of brilliant wit, and many of national fame. There was William Morris in his plain blue serge suit looking like some grand sea captain in fine spirit; George Bernard Shaw swift and direct, his companion on the occasion being E. Belfort Bax; Walter Crane active and slim as a harrier; John Burns

black-bearded and swarthy, swaggering a little, his speech harsh and nasal; Prince Kropotkine quietly observant; Arthur Balfour, all amiability. That king of men was there too, R. B. Cunninghame Grahame, tall and athletic, and Hyndman and Frederic Harrison. As I remember, the subject of conversation most in men's mouths at the time was Wilfred Scawen Blunt's new book of poems, *In Vinculis*. Mr. Blunt had suffered imprisonment for his activities on behalf of Irish independence and the book was a result. Oscar Wilde reviewed it for W. T. Stead in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, and, looking back, it seems a little curious that he somewhat dwelt upon the effect of imprisonment upon the high spirited Englishman, quoting this: "Imprisonment is a reality of discipline most useful to the modern soul, lapped as it is in physical sloth and self indulgence. Like a sickness or a spiritual retreat it purifies and ennobles; and the soul emerges from it stronger and more self contained." The words were Blunt's, but in the quotation of them by Wilde, there seems a certain foreshadowing of something to be found later in *De Profundis*.

My companion, Henry Somerfield, artist and student, pointed out Oscar Wilde to me, and, catching sight of him as he came through a low doorway, he loomed almost gigantic. He was with two men, one of them Halliday Sparling, but stopped suddenly when he noticed, hanging on the wall to his right, a piece of embroidered silk. To that he turned and fell to stroking it as a woman might a child's

hair. There may have been a prejudice in me, for my *beau ideal* was a man of the physical type of Morris, rugged and strong, but it struck me that the pictures I had seen of Wilde grossly flattered him. His mouth seemed large and loose and his teeth too prominent, and there was indubitably an air of self-assertion about him. His cheeks were flabby and his eyes heavy lidded, and tired looking, too bagged for health. And, certainly, there was a marked suspicion of a double chin.

So, it seems to me, that so far as my recollection goes, a composite picture made from the caricatures of Aubrey Beardsley and of Max Beerbohm would give a portrait more accurate by far than any to be gathered from the touched up photographs. He was neither Caliban nor Ariel. That he, in some sort, created a kind of ideal Wilde, for public consumption, is not to be wondered at. He was a public character connected with the theatre and in that capacity the public, the American and English public at any rate, looks for a something not as it is, but as the public imagines it should be. "Nature must follow Art," Wilde once said.

But the appearance of Oscar Wilde did not strike me as forcibly as did that woman-like caress of the silken fabric. It was decidedly a fondling touch, that careful down stroking of the silk with extreme finger tips, and, because of that, I have been convinced that Sherard was right when he wrote that Wilde possessed the feminine soul. And it is, I should think, quite indisputable that being possessed of the

feminine soul, his whole character was influenced. That would account for much—for his neurotic restiveness and all that hung thereon. But read the Sherard passage carefully. It is worth the reading, Sherard being not only a careful observer but, in addition, a close friend of Wilde's:

"Oscar Wilde possessed the feminine soul. This was the ghost that haunted his house of life, that sat beside him at the feast and sustained him in the day of famine; the secret influence that weighed down his manhood and enervated his hope; the knowledge that he possessed the feminine soul; that he was a slave to the capricious, critical, feminine temperament, the feminine vanity and feminine weakness to temptation; the feminine instinct of adaptability; the feminine impulse of the wanton's soul, gave him the lust for strange, forbidden pleasures, and imparted to his final repentance the sublime abnegation of the Magdalene. And yet that feminine soul endowed him with the supreme love and appreciation of beauty in every form, the music of words, the subtle harmonies of color, imagery in language, the coquetry of thought that veiled itself in paradoxes and the fine and delicate vision that created in him the instinct of the poet; the keen sense of feminine intuition in the analysis of character that made him the wit and dramatist of his day, and the feminine quality of vanity and appetite for flattery and praise that made him the first dandy of his day." And, seeking an example

of that "feminine . . repentance," read what follows, marking the closing lines:

TÆDIUM VITÆ.

To stab my youth with desperate knives, to wear
This paltry age's gaudy livery,
To let each base hand filch my treasury,
To mesh my soul within a woman's hair,
And by mere Fortune's lackeyed groom—I swear
I love it not! these things are less to me
Than the thin foam that frets upon the sea,
Less than the thistledown of summer air
Which hath no seed: better to stand aloof
Far from these slanderous fools who mock my life
Knowing me not, better the lowliest roof
Fit for the meanest kind to sojourn in,
Than to go back to that hoarse cave of strife
Where my white soul first kissed the mouth of sin.

Again, leaving for the present *Dorian Gray*, which I will write of later, consider the femininity of this, a speech he puts into the mouth of Vivian, in *Intentions*: "Nature is so uncomfortable. Grass is hard and lumpy and damp, and full of dreadful black insects." Obviously that is the language of what you and I would call a "sissy," and of a sort not to be used by the man masculine.

Another similar instance follows which I take from *The Critic as Artist*:

Ernest. No; I don't want music just at present . . . No; Gilbert, don't play any more. Turn round and talk to me. Talk to me till the white horned day comes into the room. There is something in your voice that is wonderful.

Gilbert (rising from the piano). I am not in a mood for talking tonight. How horrid of you

to smile? I really am not. Where are the cigarettes? Thanks. How exquisite these single daffodils are! They seem to be made of amber and cool ivory . . . After playing Chopin, I feel as if I had been weeping over sins I had never committed. . . .

It is a legitimate deduction that the writer who puts that kind of language into his puppets' mouths delighted in the femininization of character, had, indeed, himself a feminine streak in his composition. If you change the names of the characters supposed to be talking to read Alice and Louise, instead of Ernest and Gilbert, the passage reads convincingly. For men talking, it does not ring true. I could not imagine William Morris telling Wilfred Scawen Blunt that it was horrid of him to smile, nor can I imagine Cunninghame Grahame complaining that the grass was hard and lumpy and damp and full of dreadful black insects. But Wilde's fictional men are, all of them, tame house animals; none are as men should be, fond of adventures, thrilling experiences, striving for mastery over themselves and over circumstances.

That feminine soul of Wilde's was a something for which he was not responsible, a something that became part of him when he was yet in his mother's womb, doubtless. Nature had set a mark upon him. So, thinking of Wilde, I remember the words of old Burton, the anatomist of melancholy: "So many several ways are we plagued and punished for our father's defaults."

II.

GOLDEN DAYS.

His full name was Oscar Fingall O'Flahertie Wills Wilde, and, like a wise man, finding that his parents had christened him unsatisfactorily, he retained but the head and tail of the name. He was born in Dublin, Ireland, on October 14th, 1854, and, later, objecting to the ruthless march of the years, shifted his age a little with a kind of feminine capriciousness. His mother had desired a daughter, her first child having been a boy, and kept the young Oscar in girl's clothes as long as was decently possible. At the age of nine he entered the Portora Royal School at Enniskillen where he stayed until the year 1871, when he went to Trinity College, Dublin. As a school boy he was ordinary, taking no interests in sports and showing no particular brilliancy. That means nothing, for, like many others, he had not found the path of his genius. It was so with Goldsmith, Balzac, Dumas *pere*, Humboldt, Walter Scott. In his arithmetic he was positively backward, a trait not uncommon among literary men.

At Dublin he won the Berkeley Gold Medal for Greek, went to Oxford, taking a scholar ship and matriculating at Magdalen. He had found his path happily, took a First Class in Classical Moderations in 1876, and, two years later, a First Class in Literae Humaniores. There was a year's travel in Italy and Greece

with Professor Mahaffy and returning to England he read the Newdigate Prize Poem in the Sheldonian Theatre in 1878. That completes the tale of his scholastic education. The remainder of his public life up to the time of his cloud of trouble may be succinctly summed up in his own words spoken in answer to a question put by Sir Edward Clarke, when Wilde was in the witness box as prosecutor against Queensberry: "From 1878 I have devoted myself to literature and art. In 1881 I published a volume of poems and afterwards lectured in England and America. In 1884 I married Miss Lloyd. I have two sons, the elder of whom will be ten in June and the second nine in November."

Wilde's training then for the battle of life was in some respects a bad, and in some an excellent one. Bad because he grew up pampered, treated like a flower in a hot house, learning neither to obey nor to command, viewing life not as a serious adventure but rather as an aesthetic spectacle; excellent in that he had all bookish culture that the world could give, but bad again because it was that culture which lures to a world in which one has but to dream, or listen to dreams. Bad again was his training because it enabled him to shirk the responsibilities of life and left him ignorant of duty and discipline.

If little things about his ordinary life are set down, there is nothing to distinguish him from any one of a million. He lived joyously and drank too much on occasion, he joined the order of Freemasons and he had an affair of

two of gallantry. As a boy he was what Roosevelt would have called a mollycoddle, though Roosevelt's boyhood life reveals no especial tendency to strenuousness. But the boy Wilde never played games, never climbed a tree, never had any boyish adventure. The truth of it is that his unfortunate physical characteristics were against that. He was too big, too unwieldy, too bulky, and "used to flop about ponderously."

Naturally, such a youth would be thrown in on himself. He would, if intellectually alert, become an observer and a critic of life. Without a sense of cosmic humor such a one would be apt to become a pessimist like Schopenhauer. But Wilde had the saving sense of humor and the habit of framing his observations in words. Hence the "Oscariana." You can imagine him as a youth, or a young man in society, the lion-worshipping women flocking about him because he had written his first book of poems. There would be silly requests for this and for that, for autographs and verses for albums and all the rest of the nonsense. Out comes Wilde then with a truth straight from the shoulder. Carlyle could not have bettered it. "Being adored is a nuisance. Women treat us just as Humanity treats its gods. They worship us, and are always bothering us to do something for them."

Here is another, a something most men have thought, but few had the wit to say: "A woman will flirt with anybody in the world as long as other people are looking on."

Or this: "Pleasure is nature's test, her sign

of approval. When we are happy we are always good; but when we are good we are not always happy."

Nor was Oscar Wilde blind to the follies of Main Street. Indeed, those who mistakenly believe that there is something new and strange in the latter day novel with its portrayal of American life, might go with advantage to the pages of Wilde. You will search far before you get a cameo like this: "The subjects discussed were mainly such as form the ordinary conversation of cultured Americans of the better class, such as the immense superiority of Miss Fanny Davenport over Sarah Bernhardt as an actress; the difficulty of obtaining green corn, buckwheat cakes and hominy, even in the best English houses; the importance of Boston in the development of the world soul; the advantages of the baggage check system in railway traveling; and the sweetness of the New York accent as compared to the London drawl."

A few more rapier thrusts of the same kind each of which pricks sorely:

"There are three kinds of despots. There is the despot who tyrannizes over the body. There is the despot who tyrranizes over the soul. There is the despot who tyrannizes over the soul and body alike. The first is called the Prince. The second is called the Pope. The third is called the People."

"In America the President reigns for four years, and Journalism governs forever and ever. Fortunately, in America, Journalism has carried its authority to the grossest and most

brutal extreme. It is no longer seriously treated."

"Only the shallow know themselves."

"We are all in the gutter, but some of us are looking at the stars."

"A sentimentalist is a man who sees an absurd value in everything and doesn't know the market price of a single thing."

There is more than verbal cleverness in each of those, and the man who said, or penned them, was one who walked the world with open eyes. In every case, packed in a few words is a world of thought. Consider, for instance, the four lines given to a criticism of American journalism and how Wilde has packed in three dozen words material for an essay. There is the thought for you and if you fail to find infinite merit in it, the loss is yours. In the final half dozen words is the observation that the once considerable influence of the press has so waned that its boasts of power excite only the derision of the well informed, and no one any longer places reliance in the editorial's pretended statements of fact.

We have, then, a young man of education and some travel, a keen observer not to be deceived with outward glitter and show, who, partly because of a certain isolation in youth, has a trick of words. Brought up in comfort, if not in moderate luxury, he finds himself thrown on his own resources, compelled to make his own living, his father having died. So to London he went, where his brother was already engaged in journalistic work.

Frank Harris holds that Oscar Wilde had well assimilated Bacon's advice that a man, to be successful, must sound his own trumpet. At any rate, there was a great deal of vast self advertising. To a bored society he was a godsend with his gift of conversation, his impudence and subtle flattery. He was a latter day Beau Brummel, his mother was the well known "Speranza" and his brother was a writer for a fashionable journal. "A thaumaturg," Ernest La Jeunesse calls him, who deliberately set himself to fool the public, choosing his material where he found it, making his way so that he might not fall into a pit of poverty, by a thousand inventions, tricks, words, and touches of heaven and of hell. He invented a fad and his name was on every lip. Some derided him and he marched the swifter to victory because of the derision. He became the leader of the Aesthetes and foolish dowagers and giddy girls were at his feet. He walked the streets carrying a sunflower, and thousands followed his example. Soon there were Wilde collars and Wilde ties, and Wilde hats in the shop windows, and photographs of Wilde elbowed photographs of such notabilities as Lillie Langtry, Ellen Terry, Lord Salisbury and W. E. Gladstone. Greatly daring, he played the clown, essayed the part of a public fool indeed, and, strangely enough, made the public his dupe. In cap and bells and motley he was accepted as serious. In a way, he became a very liar of liars, and as a liar, charmed and delighted, thus running true to form. "Lying," said he, "the telling of beautiful untrue

things, is the proper aim of Art." And, "The aim of the liar is simply to charm, to delight, to give pleasure. He is the very basis of civilized pleasure."

All was grist that came to his mill. Satirists, critics, solemn and pompous editors, caricaturists—the pages of Punch, Gilbert and Sullivan, makers of common street songs, all helped to furnish the wind to speed his bark to harbor. The doors of society were open to him and the charm of his conversation did the rest. When he talked, others were silent and if he could not shine alone, Gide tells us, he withdrew into the shadow. He was, too, a true dandy, that is, an artist whose material was his own body.

Looking at him across the gulf of time, we see him as a young man assuming a vast air of superiority, of infallibility, one most decidedly insolent. His doctrine that art is independent of morality seemed at the time to have meant one thing, and, in the view of later developments in his own life, to have meant something altogether different. If, by it, he meant that art should go its way independent of moral purpose, then, of course, he was saying something by no means new or strange, but yet something that it is well should be said with frequency. To put it plainly, a work of art need carry no lesson—a picture may have no ethical tag to it—it is not necessary, nor is it desirable that a book or a story should have a moral. But to say that art must be independent of morality may also have another and occult meaning, in

which case the doctrine is a monstrosity. For art must bear a relation to ethical values if it is not to become a refined cult for those of specialized sensitiveness.

There was another side to Oscar Wilde; he had another string to his bow. He made of himself a kind of John the Baptist for Baudelaire. In England Charles Baudelaire then was almost unknown, his poetry neglected, Swinburne alone having recognized him. The Miltonic, the Biblical sonority of his music had never delighted the English ear. Wilde proclaimed himself the herald of the French poet, then, and there was a new and fascinating toy for the public. Such a *role* was delightful for a young man of Wilde's temperament. The Baudelairean teaching that "*Le Dandy doit aspirer a etre sublime sans interruption. Il doit vivre et dormir devant un miroir*" was meat and drink for the nineteenth century Brummel. None was more eager to be a hero to himself than Wilde: none more willing to live before a mirror. As for impassiveness before a society he despised, that pose certainly suited Wilde to a T.

Then there was the strange Baudelairean gesture, the "*On n'est jamais excusable d'être méchant, mais il y a quelque mérite de savior qu' on l'est; et le plus irréparable des vices est de faire le mal par bêtise.*" For Wilde was quite ready to play with the dangerous idea that a man should be thoroughly sincere in his wickedness—sincere and deliberate, and that knowingly. What strange use Wilde made of that idea may be seen in his essay on Thomas

Griffith Wainwright the poisoner. There are odd passages in that literary gem. "He sought to find expression by pen and poison:" "His crimes seem to have had an important effect upon his art:" "There is no sin except stupidity." There are other similar passages, similar because dangerous, or at least capable of bearing a dangerous construction, in *Dorian Gray*. I say dangerous, but I might as well say delightful, for they are delightful in their truth. Consider this: "Young men want to be faithful and are not, old men want to be faithless and cannot." Here again: "One should never make one's debut with a scandal, one should reserve that to give interest to one's old age." And this: "People who love once in their lives are really shallow people. What they call their loyalty and their fidelity is either the lethargy of custom or lack of imagination. Faithlessness is to the emotional life what constancy is to the intellectual life, simply a confession of failure." "Anybody can be good in the country. There are no temptations there. That is the reason why people who live out of town are so uncivilized. There are only two ways of becoming civilized. One is by being cultured, the other is by being corrupt. Country people have no opportunity of being either, so they stagnate." "The one charm of marriage is that it makes a life of deception necessary for both parties." "Nothing makes one so vain as being told that one is a sinner." "Good resolutions are a useless attempt to interfere with scientific laws; their origin pure vanity, their results absolutely

nil." "The costume of the nineteenth century is detestable. Sin is the only real color-element left in modern life." "One can never pay too high a price for one's sensations." "The only difference between a caprice and a life-long passion is that caprice lasts a little longer."

Much of that which I have quoted, and more, returned to plague him, as we shall see later. All and sundry went as evidence against him, much of it being little more than poetic gesture; some, fantastic naughtiness. Baudelaire, like many another romantic intellectual, held himself to be one of the greatest of sinners, and, therefore, marked out for special and extraordinary forgiveness. That kind of thing is a childish trait, I think, for every thoughtful man can remember when, under the influence of religious emotion, he believed himself to be too black of soul for salvation. But, in spite of all sensationalism, most men and women lead comparatively spotless lives.

However, just as your sudden convert at a revivalist meeting will be moved to confess to wild sins of which he is guiltless, hiding those that are mean and despicable, so with poetic exaggeration did Baudelaire ecstatically sing of his *ame damnee*—sing of himself as one who had sold his soul to a puissant though affable kind of devil. That kind of thing is poetic ecstasy, a kind of a game of intellectual entanglement, and names spring to mind of other players—Sainte-Beuve with his novel Volupté and his altar to sexual pleasure, Cat-

ulle Mendes, Verlaine, Theophile Gautier. And it would be hypocritical to deny that there is, in most of us, a marked disposition to be vastly interested in crime and evil and the underworld.

Wilde, then, became the forerunner of Baudelaire in England and, quite naturally, mirrored his master. What wonder then that there was a flourish and a Baudelairean-Verlain gesture? an aspect of fantastic naughtiness? That would seem to account for the poem Helas which introduced his book of poetry to the English public. Any discerning reader may crudely analyze it for himself.

HELAS!

To drift with every passion till my soul
Is a stringed lute on which all winds can play.
Is it for this that I have given away
Mine ancient wisdom, and austere control?
Methinks my life is a twice-written scroll
Scrawled over on some boyish holiday
With idle songs for pipe and virelay,
Which do but mar the secret of the whole.
Surely there was a time I might have trod
The sunlit heights, and from life's dissonance
Struck one clear chord to reach the ears of God:
Is that time dead? lo! with a little rod
I did but touch the honey of romance—
And must I lose a soul's inheritance?

It was his first book and appeared in June, 1881, 250 copies being used for the first edition and 500 equally divided between the third and second editions. Now mark the business man in Wilde, the man with an eye to the main chance. Not by any means would he let the book fall flat from the press. There were reviews, to be sure, in the leading society jour-

nals, in the *Athenaeum*, the *Academy* and in the *Saturday Review*, with a highly laudatory one in the *World* by his brother, but that was not enough. Wilde ever marched with banners and music and the greatest must be called upon to herald him. So there was a letter to Robert Browning, poet whose songs were never echoes of other songs, man of subtle and nimble intellect.

Keats House,
Tite Street, Chelsea.

My Dear Browning:

If you get the opportunity, and would care for it, I wish you would review my first volume of poems just about to appear; books so often fall into stupid and illiterate hands that I am anxious to be really criticised; ignorant praise or ignorant blame is so insulting.

Truly yours,
OSCAR WILDE.

We know according to the agreement between publisher and poet, that all charges in relation to the work were paid by Wilde, in three installments. He had ventured, and would not let his venture die. Punch's Almanack for 1882 helped to make it a success with a clever parody of the poem Les Silhouettes called

MORE IMPRESSIONS,
(By Oscuro Wildgoose.)
Des Sornettes.

My little fancy's clogged with gush,
My little lyre is false in tone,
And when I lyrically moan,
I hear the impatient critic's "Tush!"

But I've "Impressions!" These are grand!
Mere dabs of words, mere blobs of tint,

Displayed on canvas or in print,
Men laud and think they understand.
A smudge of brown, a smear of yellow,
No tale, no subject—there you are!
Impressions!—and the strangest far
Is that the bard's a clever fellow.

I quote that by way of showing that at the time of the appearance of the book there was no apparent suspicion of shameful conduct—of amusing eccentricity, yes, but the other, no. Those were the days when Wilde was a busy pilot heading his craft into the wind, and the gesture of confession of fantastic sins is but a gesture and nothing more. Like all of us, in his time Wilde had to play many parts, and his role just then was business man, performer, and impresario, and very well he played his triple part. As an instance, we see him as his own advertiser, inspiring a society note in his brother's paper to the effect that the success of his book of poems had resulted in an invitation to visit the United States. So he sailed for New York and here, his first *bon mot*, a statement to the custom house men that he had "nothing to declare but his genius," tickled the public fancy.

His subject was, in the main, an advocacy of beautiful furniture but the tour was only a moderate success. What is of real value lies in his witty observations and salutary criticism of American ways and manners. Many a rap over the knuckles he gave to those over zealous advocates of a "new" literature, of an art literally emancipated from old world tyrannies, and all that kind of nonsense. Nor would he be backward in saying what he

thought to be true anent the sham aristocracies of wealth and social position won by smartness, nor the spirit of sensationalism that leads to the exploitation of every sort of mental vagary that covers itself with the lamb's skin of "science," nor to the incredible inanities of puritanical editors, nor the pinchbeck orators whose flamboyant boastings of national superiority were heard in every corner of the land. So there came of the tour brilliant flashes of criticism. I choose one or two examples.

"The youth of America is their oldest tradition. It has been going on now for three hundred years. To hear them talk one would imagine they were in their first childhood. As far as civilization goes they are in their second."

"America is a paradise for women—that is why, like Eve, the American women are extremely anxious to get out of it."

"All Americans dress well—they get their clothes in Paris."

"It is absurd to say that there are neither ruins nor curiosities in America when they have their mothers and their manners."

Of course Wilde did not say those things while on tour. So quick an observer as he could not fail to see that the American public is an ass that loves to be tickled, that delights in flattery; expects to be told that America stands on star crowned heights, that it is the hope of the world and heir of the ages. Wilde knew, quite as well as Victor Hugo knew, that the mob is an old Narcissus. He

knew that to win an American audience there had to be the appearance of a stout hearted conviction that democracy is the only rational form of government and that art could flourish under no "effete monarchy." Every man knows how the Chautauquan lecturer gets away with his ineptitudes. Hear Oscar Wilde then, when he talked to American audiences. I copy an extract:

"It is rather, perhaps, to you that we would turn to complete and perfect this great movement of ours, for there is something Hellenic in your air and world, something that has a quicker breath of the joy and power of Elizabeth's England about it than our ancient civilization can give us. For you, at least, are young; no hungry generations tread you down, and the past does not mock you with the ruins of a beauty the secret of whose creation you have lost. That very absence of tradition which Ruskin thought would rob your rivers of their laughter and your flowers of their light may be rather the source of your freedom and strength. To speak in literature with the perfect rectitude of the movement of animals, and the unimpeachableness of the sentiment of trees and the grass by the wayside, has been defined by one of your poets as the flawless triumph of art; it is a triumph which you above all other nations may be destined to achieve. For the voices that have their dwelling in sea and mountain are not the chosen music of liberty only. Other messages are there, if you will but listen to them—may yield you the splendor of some new imagination, the marvel of some new liberty."

Wilde, as I have said, was a good business man and knew his market. The passage as given will pay the re-reading, and, by way of seeing the man with his tongue in his cheek, remember that he also wrote this: "Good

Americans when they die go to Paris: bad Americans when they die go to America."

America disposed of, Oscar Wilde flung aside his shirts with laced sleeves, his velveteen knickerbockers with buckles, his black silk stockings and his biretta. Both lily and sunflower went to the scrap heap and he had his hair cut. His name was world known, he had the public ear and he could afford to change his manner of advertisement. He was back in England in April, 1883. There was a lively passage of arms between Whistler and Wilde which makes mighty good reading in Whistler's *Gentle Art of Making Enemies*, and Wilde was accused of building a reputation on borrowed *bons mots*. An idea may be gained of the liveliness of the argument from a passage or two, quoting saliencies on both sides.

Whistler: "Costume is not dress. And the wearers of wardrobes may not be doctors of taste. . . . " And further: "What has Oscar in common with Art except that he dines at our tables and picks from our platters the plums for the pudding that he peddles in the provinces? Oscar—the amiable, irresponsible, escurient Oscar—with no more sense of a picture than he has of the fit of a coat—has the courage of the opinions—of others!"

Wilde: ". . . with our James vulgarity begins at home and should be allowed to stay there."

Both men, be it observed, were persistent and clever advertisers, and both men had the gift of instant repartee. The quarrel was highly enjoyed by, and profitable to, both men. Indeed, it was more of a game of conversational entanglements than a disagreement, a kind of

"joshing" on a high plane. Moreover, it was good advertising, and Wilde was lecturing in English towns on "Personal Impressions of America." Reports of the Wilde-Whistler affair reached New York too where they were seized upon as publicity, for his play *Vera* was billed for production at the Union Square Theatre. Wilde crossed the Atlantic to be on hand at the first performance but it was a failure and he returned to England, September, 1883, and resumed lecturing. That, indeed, seemed to be the shortest cut to gain ready money which he needed, to give him time in which to write. The rose dawn of his literary activity tinged his world.

III.

FAME, AND GOLD, AND PLEASURE.

There were ten years in which Oscar Wilde was Lord of Life, to use his own phrase. On his return from New York, he went to Paris, worked hard, wrote his *The Duchess of Padua* and commenced *The Sphinx*. Discussion of his literary work must be reserved for another place. Andre Gide, his French friend, tells us that the name of Wilde traveled from lip to lip and the most absurd anecdotes were told about him. "Wilde was pictured as everlastingly smoking gold-tipped cigarettes and strolling about with a sunflower in his hand. For Wilde had always the gift of playing up to those who nowadays fashion fame, and he made for himself an amusing mask that covered his actual countenance."

His immediate task ended, he returned to England and in 1884 married Constance Lloyd and they made their home at 16 Tite Street, Chelsea. For two years he edited the Woman's World, and, also, did much work for periodicals, reviewing for the *Pall Mall Gazette*, the *Queen*, the *Speaker* and other leading journals. There is some excellent stuff buried in those reviews. His literary output was great and accounts for the golden stream that poured in upon him, unhappily, to overcome him. The man was full of vitality and the rising sap overflowed. The list of his works follows.

1885. Shakespeare and Stage Costume, (XIX Century Magazine).
1887. Lord Arthur Savile's Crime.
The Canterville Ghost.
The Sphinx without a Secret.
The Model Millionaire.
1888. The Happy Prince and Other Tales.
1889. The Portrait of Mr. W. H.
Pen, Pencil and Poison.
Decay of the Art of Lying.
1890. The Critic as Artist.
1891. A House of Pomegranates.
Intentions.
The Soul of Man under Socialism.
The Picture of Dorian Gray.
Salome.
1892. Lady Windermere's Fan.
1893. A Woman of No Importance.
1895. An Ideal Husband.
The Importance of Being Earnest.
(Then came the crash, and in prison he wrote or planned the following:)
De Profundis.
The Ballad of Reading Gaol.
Two letters on Prison abuses which were published in the Daily Chronicle of May 28th, 1897, and March, 24th, 1898.

He fell into the hands of Circe the enchantress in 1886. That seems to have been established at the trial, for, certainly there were no loose gestures or foul talk about the man in society, nor is there evidence in his literary work of anything untoward. If there was defilement in the inward parts, to use a Miltonism, the world did not know it. Somehow, he got into a wrong environment, something went wrong within him and the sorcery of habit completed the work. Even affection drew him down, down to a secret hell vast and vague as the hell of Milton, a hall of torture darker than Dante's. It sickens one to read the record of the trial and to think of the effect of the hereditary curse upon the scholar; to read of the lads with whom he consorted; of secret voluptuous rooms; of shameless kissing of waiters and stable boys; of expensive gifts flying about,—gold cigarette cases, cameo rings, purses of gold, gorgeous walking canes. And, on the other side of the scene, Wilde entertained by the proud and dignified, friend of fine and simple ladies and maidens, welcomed in heroic company. It is all a maddening mystery. One thinks of the fatal potency of demoniac powers—of men changed to stone by the glance of Medusa, of the tress of Lilith, the cup of Circe. It ill serves to dwell on it all.

There is a fine picture of another side of the man—Sherard's picture, where he tells of the home in Tite Street. "It was a very temple of lettered ease, exquisitely decorated and appointed with solid comfort. A study had been fitted up for him at the top of the house, but I

do not believe that he ever wrote a line there and what writing he did do in Tite Street was done on Carlyle's writing table, in the little room on the right of the entrance passage. It was in reference to his idleness, in spite of all the inducements that his abode held out to industry, that he said to me, 'I am not doing what I ought to do; I ought to be putting black on white—black on white.'"

His income, just before the storm broke was more than $40,000 a year and he had lived up to the money. What that means may be guessed. There came a time when he feasted too liberally and drank too much. "I would have backed him to eat the head off a brewer's drayman three times a day, and his capacity for whiskey and soda knew no bounds," records Lord Alfred Douglas in his *Oscar Wilde and Myself*. Robert Ross too has something to say about his tremendous appetite. "He lived *en prince*," writes Sherard, "and was so reckoned by the hotel servants and restaurant waiters." Imagine all that kind of thing then and the coming of the day when whispering tongues began to wag, when there were polite intimations at this hotel and at that to the effect that the presence of Oscar Wilde as a guest was not welcomed, when tales were told behind raised hands of strange circumstances, when Wilde entering this semi-public place, and that, found backs turned on him. Then came *The Green Carnation*, in which Wilde was sketchily portrayed and strange forbidden indulgences hinted at. And so the storm broke and then darkness, deep and profound.

IV.

WILDE'S STRENGTH.

In that period of ten golden years, Wilde and Nietzsche came very close together in spirit. Both teachers were given to the worship of Dionysus and Aphrodite, were opponents of asceticism, were standing with faces turned towards worldly power, worldly success. Both men were self-assertive and both violently attacked established morality. At heart, Wilde was an anarchist as was Nietzsche. In some ways, Wilde lived the life that Nietzsche advocated, living full and abundantly, feeling every thrill and ecstasy, aiming at fulness and intensity of life. It is none of our business to stand with an eye at a peep hole looking into his inner self, and I am not writing now of his psychological life. Doubtless when he reflected, he was very sorry for parts of his life and wished that things had been better, just as you do, and as I do, and as all of us do, or should, if there is any health in us.

You see, one can imagine Oscar Wilde being taken to pieces as it were, dismantled as workmen in a railroad shop dismantle a locomotive to find this part in excellent order, that doubtful, another overworked, another unsafe to the point of rejection, and yet another part fit for nothing but the scrap heap. And yet, with all the imperfections, the locomotive gave excellent service and with certain repairs and renewals would, for years, give more and better

service still. But a man cannot be dismantled and repaired as a machine can—perhaps it would be most excellent if such were possible. Still, we are not fools to condemn or to overlook the performances of a locomotive simply because the flues were caked with sediment or the firebox found with leaky staybolts. It is only in regard to men that we act thus idiotically.

As far as the world is concerned, Wilde functioned, not normally, but splendidly, during those ten years. It is not possible in this essay to say the interesting and exciting things that could, and should, be said about his writings, that must be left for another place. And, be it said, there remains much to say and to discover, for Wilde has been written of by many men who were articulate, shown to be much better than he was by this one, much blacker than he was by that. But this is certain. He was a keen observer and wrote of English society with great accuracy; he was a satirist of the petty side of human nature; he wrote in an admirably lucid, unpretentious style and was always interesting; he cultivated notoriety with assiduity; his humor was always subtle and delicate and odd—though some have declared it unoriginal. As a critic his rank is high.

But what is possible to show in limited compass, I think, is that like Thoreau, he spoke truths with bullet-like directness, embodying much wisdom in few words. He took time to pick and choose, arrange and rearrange—took time to eliminate the unnecessary. Obviously,

it is far easier to write a two column editorial than it is to write an epigram of the length of a couple of dozen words. I have picked out a few specimen gems—a book or two could be filled with others equally witty—and the reader will be hard set to it to show that Wilde's theoretical morality was other than excellent. Indeed, nine out of ten will find themselves saying: "That is very true: I, myself, have felt it to be so, but could not express it." Here then:

"There is always a certain amount of danger in any attempt to cultivate impossible virtues." (In other words, don't try to wind yourself too high for mortal man beneath the sky, as the poet put it. Or Thoreau, you may recall, spoke of those men who gathered their material to build a bridge to the moon, and wound up by making a wood shed of the material.)

"Lounging in the open air is not a bad school for poets, but it largely depends on the lounger."

"There seems to be some curious connection between piety and poor rhymes."

"It is always a pleasure to come across an American poet who is not national, and who tries to give expression to the literature that he loves rather than to the land in which he lives. The Muses care so little for geography!"

"Most modern novels are more remarkable for their crime than for their culture."

"In art, as in life, the law of heredity holds good. On est toujours fils de quelqu'un." (One is always the son of someone.)

"No one survives being over-estimated."

"With an evening coat and a white tie, even a stock broker can gain a reputation for being civilized."

"The fatality of good resolution is that they are always too late."

"In modern life nothing produces such an effect as a good platitude. It makes the whole world kin."

"Society is entirely composed of beautiful idiots and brilliant lunatics."

"No man is rich enough to buy back his past."

"Fashion is what one wears oneself. What is unfashionable is what other people wear."

"Modern women understand everything except their husbands."

"Fathers should be neither seen nor heard. That is the only proper basis for family life."

"We are all of us so hard up nowadays that the only pleasant things to pay are compliments. They're the only things we can pay."

"Women only call each other sister after they have called each other a lot of other things first."

"To get into the best society nowadays, one has either to feed people, amuse people, or shock people."

"Discontent is the first step in the progress of a man or a nation."

A smiling Swift was Oscar Wilde, a smiling Swift and a gentle Hogarth, very authentic, very precise. There is delicacy, as you see, in the way in which he tells us about ourselves, shows us our own deceits, fooleries, vulgarities. It is easy to imagine him in society keeping up the conversation with a wealth of stories and sparkling brilliancies drawn from memory and imagination, the fascination of the freedom of his opinions. No abstract verbiage, no pitiless sarcasm, nothing coarse or vicious —in the years of his strength he might have walked with the charming Sir Philip Sidney, most gracious of scholars and gentlemen.

V.

WILDE'S WEAKNESS.

Without pandering to idle, or prurient curiosity, it is, I think, eminently desirable that something very plain should be said regarding the misdemeanor of which Wilde was found guilty and sentenced to imprisonment. Frank Harris, in his *Oscar Wilde; His Life and Confessions*, (New York, 1918), has a stirring passage in which he says that Wilde was "punished for his popularity and pre-eminence, for the superiority of his mind and wit; he was punished by the envy of journalists, and by the malignant pedantry of half civilized judges." That, of course, cannot be taken seriously. England and the English had, on the contrary, accepted Wilde, had loaded him with honors, had placed him on a pedestal, and all this while Wilde was young. In fact, many greater artists than Wilde had found their path to recognition far more thorny than he. The Frank Harris flourish does but obfuscate the issue in part.

In a word, Wilde's crime was that of the homo-sexualist and he was punished according to the laws of England as a sexual pervert, and not persecuted because he was an artist. His chief partner in his land of purple pleasure was his friend, Lord Alfred Douglas, also a poet.

The blunt speaking Mencken sweeps Wilde into the gutter with a single sweep of the arm.

"Wilde was a bounder and a swine," he writes, somewhere, and many are equally condemnatory with him. So, on one end of the scale there is the Harris viewpoint, on the other, the Mencken, and truth and fairness is in neither. Wilde suffers as much from the one as from the other. I will show you why I think so.

While to me, homo-sexuality is a something to be regarded with a shudder, I being of the lucky ones with a normal constitution, so also do I shudder at other unpleasant things—tuberculosis, for instance, or insanity, or gross ignorance, or sordid poverty. But while shuddering, I realize that there are underlying causes for each and every one of these ills, and feel that those who suffer from any one of them are subjects for pity and not for condemnation. Mumble as I will words about being a master of my fate and captain of my soul, I cannot dismiss from my mind the remembrance of the Jukes family for instance, and that drunkard Max Jukes from whom descended in seventy-five years 200 thieves and murderers, 280 who were idiots, or blind, or tubercular, 90 who were prostitutes and 300 children who, fortunately we must think, died prematurely. I cannot set aside what I know to be true, that even habitually sober parents who, at the moment of conception, are in a temporary state of drunkenness, may beget children who are epileptic, or paralytic, or idiotic, or insane, or microcephalic.

Now in the case of Oscar Wilde there is cause to believe that he sprang from a defec-

tive line of ancestors. That he was a man of intellect, a poet and a critic of high achievement by no means prevents him from being also a moral degenerate, and that I hold him to have been. As Dr. Talbot has shown in his study of Degeneracy, a degenerate may be a scientist, an able lawyer, a great artist, a poet, a mathematician and for all that present, from a moral standpoint, profound defects, strange peculiarities and surprising lapses of conduct. Remember Paul Verlaine, ignoring all received codes of morality, a social outcast, yet writer of verses of a penetrating beauty. Or there is Francois Villon, accomplice of thieves and rogues and prostitutes whose poetry was of the highest order. There is Baudelaire, too, certainly one who takes his place, without effort, among the lesser of the world's great poets, yet experiencing morbid passions in love, craving ugly and horrible women, negresses, dwarfs.

When the fathers have eaten sour grapes, says the old proverb, the teeth of the children are set on edge, which is only another way of stating the fact that the sins of the parents are visited upon the children unto the third and fourth generation. The writers of the old Mosaic books seem to have known a great deal of what we call latter day results of scientific research. The difference between us and them comes in that while we say much with our lips, we are too stupid or bull headed to confess in our hearts. Certainly in the veins of Oscar Wilde flowed a tainted stream. His mother suffered from a modified form of giant-

ism and Bernard Shaw has told us of her great hands and the half darkness in which she lived. Her son Oscar was a great bodied fellow who gave no impression of muscularity or of strength. "A great, flabby fellow," said my friend to me when first we saw him at the Arts and Crafts exhibition. And flabby he was, with heavy, flabby cheeks, which looked as if they belonged to a much bigger man.

Wilde's father, Dr. Sir William Wilde, had a reputation for gallantries and was defendant in a charge of rape, later changed to one of the seduction of a patient in his charge. A certain ape-like characteristic about him was noted by one who knew him well. "A pithecoid person of extreme sensuality," said Professor R. T. Tyrrell. So, Oscar Wilde had a bad start. Hereditary influence must have very strongly disposed him. There was a taint in him just as there were taints in the case of Beethoven with his drunken father; Byron with his half-mad mother; Schopenhauer with his morbid father; Renan with his insane grandfather. And the taints had their evidences so that Beethoven had his melancholia and his syphilitic disease, Byron his half mad passionate rage, Schopenhauer his deep despondencies, and Renan his neurosis. It all helps to throw light on the ugly part of the Wilde life, that part which yahoos delight to mull over.

Worse, as like seeks like, Wilde came into close contact with one in whose veins ran streams equally tainted. For his friend, Lord Alfred Douglas, came from no clean stock. His father, the Marquis of Queensberry, was a

fellow who, in theaters and public places, on occasion acted more like an hysterical virago in liquor than as a rational civilized being. There were scenes in which he knocked down and sometimes was knocked down by men in altercations, in which he stood up in theater boxes and pitched carrots at the actors, or hissed plays when he did not like the sentiment, and all that kind of thing. His sister, Lady Florence Dixie, was no less erratic. In Ireland, at the time of the Fenian trouble when Parnell was wrongly accused of complicity in murder, she came out with a wonderful tale of having been attacked by masked men. Investigation showed the whole to be without foundation. I remember the time when she touched Patagonia, her companion being Prince somebody of Battenburg, and the tales that she afterwards told of her adventures bespoke a lively imagination very averse to letting a story die for the sake of local coloring. So the family had its skeleton and the scion of the house was no safe friend for Wilde.

It must not be supposed that Wilde leaped into the whirlpool of wilfulness with Lord Alfred Douglas and his friends as a man leaps into business or matrimony. There was a time when Wilde and Douglas were as David and Jonathan, as Orestes and Pylades—a pair between whom there existed a peerless friendship. But along the downward path the black poison in their veins urged them, slowly at first but ever increasing in speed, and as they went, weaker grew their wills, coarser their

moral fiber until both became the slaves of the genii they had unbottled.

Oscar Wilde, like Walter Pater and many others, had thoroughly assimilated the Platonic idea of Love as the safeguard of states, meaning by the word love, not by any means the love between the sexes, but what we might call romantic friendship, for the love of women, in the Platonic viewpoint, is mere sensuality. In our occidental civilization where the dollar and the dollar only counts, romantic friendship between men is almost unknown, and, indeed, it would be no untruth to say that man no longer has friends, but merely chance acquaintances. So very true is that in England, when Tennyson's *In Memoriam* appeared, a poem giving superb expression to the poet's love for his lost friend, Arthur Hallam, the Times newspaper solemnly rebuked the poet's language as unfitted for any but amatory tenderness. Tennyson himself made mention of the number of shameful letters of abuse he had received about it. (see Memoir by his son, page 800) Walt Whitman, too, has been accused of morbidity because of a passage or two from his *Leaves of Grass* which extolled "threads of manly friendship, fond and loving, pure and sweet, strong and lifelong." I quote from the edition of 1890, on page 102:

> Whose happiest days were far away through fields, in woods, on hills, he and another wandering hand in hand, they twain apart from other men.
> Who oft as he saunter'd the streets, curv'd with his arm the shoulder of his friend, while the arm of his friend rested upon him also.

And another passage:

That night while all was still I heard the waters
roll slowly continuously up the shores,
I heard the hissing rustle of the liquid and
sands as directed to me whispering to con-
gratulate me,
For the one I love most lay sleeping by me
under the same cover in the cool night,
In the stillness in the autumn moonbeams his
face was inclined toward me,
And his arm lay lightly around my breast—and
that night I was happy.

Clearly there is something of great beauty in both passages and certainly nothing to offend. But there are people who would have lascivious notions if they saw a six-months-old baby in its bath, people who see filth because it hangs forever like a film before their eyes. To such, friendship as is here pictured, or as it is extolled by Tennyson in his *In Memoriam*, is quite inconceivable. They hunt for indecencies, for debaucheries, for lewdnesses and they clothe cleanness in filthy rags. And yet there are indubitable evidences of such friendships. One remembers Sir Philip Sidney and Hubert Languey, Queen Anne and the Duchess of Churchill, Richard Wagner and the king of Bavaria, Sir Thomas Browne of the *Religio Medici* whose devotion to his man friend altogether replaced the love of the opposite sex.

Still, these are exceptional cases, and it is a fact that men who form romantic attachments are not to be considered altogether normal. Such as do so may almost be considered as a race apart, and as a race apart we must consider them. An Austrian writer, K. H. Ul-

richs, has given to them the name of Urnings, the word being taken from Uranos, heaven; the contention of such people being that their love and affection was of a higher order than the ordinary attachment. Neuropathic physicians have made estimates that are startling as to the frequency with which such subnormal people are to be found, Dr. Grabowsky quoting as high as one man in every twenty-two, and Dr. Moll (*Die Contrare Sexual-empfinding*, chap. 3,) estimating from one in fifty to as low as one in every five hundred men, the ratio varying in different countries and in different classes in the same country. At any rate, there are, apparently, enough affected to make it clear that to draw a veil of silence over the subject is crassly stupid, while to pretend that it is an undiscussable thing is stupider still.

Edward Carpenter, with no reference to the sexual aspect of the phenomenon, has held that the presence of so strangely disposed a people in human society is a necessity from a psychical point of view, in that it brings about a kind of *rapprochment* between the sexes. "The sexes do not, or should not normally form two groups hopelessly isolated in habit and feeling from each other, but rather represent the two poles of one group—which is the human race; so while certainly the extreme specimens at either pole are vastly divergent, there are great numbers in the middle region who (though differing corporeally as men and women) are by emotion and temperament very near to each other....Nature, it might ap-

pear, in mixing the elements which go to compose each individual, does not always keep her two groups of ingredients—which represent the two sexes—properly apart, but often throws them crosswise in a somewhat baffling manner, now this way and now that; yet wisely, we must think—for if the normal distinction of elements were obdurately maintained, the two sexes would drift into far latitudes and absolutely cease to understand each other. As it is, there are some remarkable and (we think) indispensable types of character, in whom there is such a union or balance of the feminine and masculine qualities that these people become to a great extent the interpreters of men and women to each other."

Examining the salient characteristics of men of the Wilde type, referring of course to their abnormal side, Otto de Joux sketches them as an ornithologist would sketch a bird. The passage follows, and, while he certainly did not have Wilde in mind, it will be seen that the description fits as a glove fits the hand. "They are enthusiastic for poetry and music, are often eminently skilful in the fine arts, and are overcome with emotion and sympathy at the least sad occurrence. Their sensitiveness, their endless tenderness for children, their love of flowers, their great pity for beggars and crippled folk are truly womanly." That fits, not only Wilde, but equally well others with a strong suspicion of a similar temperament: Shakespeare for instance, and Paul Verlaine, and Kit Marlowe, and Michelangelo.

In similar connection hear also what Edward Carpenter has said (An Unknown People, The Reformer, Lond., 1897.):

"Emotionally they are extremely complex, tender, sensitive, pitiful and loving, full of storm and stress, of ferment and fluctuation of the heart; the logical faculty may or may not, in their case, be well developed, but intuition is always strong. . . . Such an one is often a dreamer, of brooding, reserved habits, often a musician, or a man of culture, courted in society, which nevertheless does not understand him—though sometimes a child of the people, without any culture, but almost always with a peculiar inborn refinement."

But enough. Putting two and two together, the man physical and the man psychical and temperamental, taking into account his ancestry, my position is that Oscar Wilde could no more help being what he was than I can help being what I am, a quarrelsome, obstinate, muscular fellow obsessed with a love for things literary, irritable under restraint, passionately fond of horses and of birds, a yearner for the open air and the sea, and an instinctive hater of all men in authority. That he held the Greek view of friendship and love was well, but it was by no means well that he did not adopt other Greek virtues. Had he done so, had he been a true Greek pagan as he wished to be thought, there would have been more of sturdy self-discipline and less of gluttony and of sloth and self indulgence. There would have been a rigid insistence upon the Greek virtues of moderation and of temperance and of reverence. But the springs of his own self-

control were impotent and that which might have been a man, turned instead into a pale ghost.

VI.

THE STORM AND NIGHT.

I repeat, the springs of his own self control were impotent. To put the matter in simple language, something went wrong in his brain just as something may go wrong in my brain or in yours. A tiny bubble of air no larger than a pin head blocks the way in some capillary, we will say, and the gentle mother becomes on an instant a murderess. Sanity hangs on a hair. We style ourselves civilized Christians, but are we more than pagans under a veneer? We pride ourselves on our self possession, our philosophic calm, and, as by the touch of a magician's wand, something happens, and we become vandals, barbarians, worse than swine rooting among skulls. Nor is this a mere figure of speech. Medical records abound with such cases. Read Trelat, (*Recherches historiques sur la folie*, page 81) and ponder on the case of a woman who after an accident sang Latin hymns and poems utterly unknown to her. There were, in her case, unsuspected childish memories and with a jolt, the flood gates were opened. In the same book there is recorded another case, that of a child who, wounded in the head, constructed syllogisms in German though, when again in health, she was no longer able to utter a single sentence in that language. Forbes Winslow the alienist tells of a gentleman of his ac-

quaintance who, incapable of doing an ordinary multiplication sum, yet became an excellent mathematician during an attack of mania. Something went suddenly wrong and the gifted Casanova stained his life and became a swindler; Muret the humanist was condemned by a French court for sodomy; Bulwer Lytton beat and bit his wife on their honeymoon and his brutishness grew so marked that the courier who accompanied them refused to continue the journey; Benvenuto Cellini passed from the highest idealism to apeish rage, beating his models, slashing to pieces the bed linen of an inn keeper because pay was asked in advance, leaving his work to stab a man who had annoyed him; fits of insanity came upon Swift, Southey, Cowper, Gounod, Poe, Collins, MacDowell, Verdi, and many are those who have forced open the gates of death for themselves. The catalogue is both wearisome and saddening. But mark this, nor deem it exaggeration. Just as the merest fraction of a change in the plane of a cone changes an ellipse to a path that cannot be charted because it sweeps into infinity, so in the mind of man an imperceptible change in a tissue causes a veering from sanity to insanity. We see how dread the outlook when applied to ourselves, but we are prone to condemn others. We forget that tranquil moderation and chastened calm may not always be ours, and well it is that we should forget, for else we would be as frightened children gazing at an unfathomable abyss.

So there came a day when, for Oscar Wilde,

the sky was blotted out and the light became darkness. Constance Wilde, his beautiful wife, realized that for some years before the storm broke he had been far from normal. Others knew it too. His very indifference to the comfort of others told a tale. There was the strange incident when he arrived very late at a luncheon party and the gentle hostess mildly bade him look at the clock. "Oh madam," he answered, "what can that little clock know of what the great golden sun is doing?" Some have suggested that his tardiness was due to the fact that he wished to make his *bon mot.* If so, that alone would be suspicious. Then there were eccentricities of dress, the modelling and dressing of his hair after the fashion of Nero, and certain imitations of Heliogabalus. You must imagine the pain that all that kind of thing undoubtedly caused his wife and his two young sons, and his friends, and you must picture his unnatural callousness if he realized that pain and his singular inhuman detachment if he did not. In either case there is subnormality. I think that it is not necessary to be an alienist to suspect his partial insanity, result, doubtless, of that black drop of blood coursing his veins inherited from a failing stock. But you get the pain to others, I think, as the salient feature. That is the real tragedy. The letter from his wife when the crash came carries a note of real terror. Judge for yourself:

My Dear Mr. Sherard:

It was indeed awful, more so than I had any conception it could be. I could not see him, and I could not touch him, and I scarcely spoke.

Come and see me before you go to him on Monday. At any time after two I can see you. When I go again, I am to get at the Home Secretary through Mr. ——— and try and get a room to see him in and touch him again. He has been mad the last three years, and he says that if he saw ——— he would kill him. So he had better keep away, and be satisfied with having marred a fine life. Few people can boast of so much.

I thank you for your kindness to a fallen friend; you are so kind and gentle to him, and you are, I think, the only person he can bear to see.

Yours most truly,
CONSTANCE WILDE.

The bare record of the trials runs as follows, as set down for posterity in the Dictionary of Dates:

The Marquis of Queensberry charged with publishing a libel against Mr. Oscar Wilde, author; acquitted, the case being withdrawn. 3-5 April, 1895. Mr. Oscar Wilde and Alfred Taylor tried for misdemeanours, 19 April; partial acquittal; jury disagree; new trial ordered, 1 May; Mr. Wilde bailed, 7 May; Alfred Taylor convicted, 21 May, and Oscar Wilde, 25 May; both sentenced to 2 years imprisonment with hard labour, 25 May, 1895.

The full report of the trial (Three Times Tried, Famous Old Bailey Trials of the XIX Century) is painful reading with its misinterpretation of high idealism and its dragging into prominence suggestions of bestiality. One imagines a mighty net swept across the city of London, catching all kinds of things clean and unclean. Blackmailers, panderers, poets, detectives, fast sporting characters were there as interested persons. There were grooms, valets, servants male and female, and morons and de-

generates who had figured in court in a vice raid the year before. A most unsavory business indeed and a festival of libidinosity. But, assuming that Wilde was actually guilty of the bestiality charged to him, and that justice made no mistake, the daring of the man astounds. Astounds, for it was not the daring of the world-wise man. Reading of that act of folly in instituting proceedings against the Marquis of Queensberry, of that other folly in making a superb gesture when the blackmailer was at his door with the incriminating letter; the intense egotism of the man in his extravagant attitude is more like the bravado of a highwayman on the scaffold than anything else.

Consider the matter a moment assuming that Wilde was quite cognizant that at the first flash of publicity dangerous and damaging incidents would point at him like sharp swords. There was Queensberry, a man about town well enough known for his disregard of conventionalities and his habit of brawling, a fellow with none of the finer instincts, who wrote on a visiting card an accusation against Wilde and handed it to the doorkeeper of a well known club, the Albermarle, with instructions that it be given to Wilde. Now mark what follows. Wilde's actions have all the appearance of outraged virtue and none of discovered vice. As soon as the law could move, the Marquis of Queensberry was arrested on a warrant charging him with publishing a libel concerning Wilde. Wilde drove to the court of justice in a carriage with a couple

of dashing horses, his companion being Lord Alfred Douglas, son of the Marquis of Queensberry, suspected partner in guilt with Wilde, according to the general supposition. Indeed, the documents in the first trial were letters which Wilde had written to Douglas, of which more later. So the first trial went on, and took a strange turn, the writings of Wilde being introduced in the endeavor to show that they were immoral and obscene.

It is a picture to visualize, that court of law with its eminent articulate men, the solicitors Carson and Sir Edward Clarke, brilliant men both; Wilde in the witness box leaning over the rail in confident manner, toying with his gloves as he answers the questions, dressed like a dandy in tight fitting frock coat, white collar and black flowing tie; Queensberry, short of stature, rugged, defiant, wearing his blue hunting stock instead of collar and tie, frowning, muttering, sometimes threatening. For a time things went very well, but letters were introduced, letters for which Wilde had been blackmailed, and, later, names were mentioned, names of doubtful characters not at all in the Wilde social world and presently Wilde's calm fell from him at a question and "raising his voice, and bringing down his hand on the rail of the witness box, Wilde declared that what had been said was an infamous lie." A little later the seriousness of the situation seems to have suddenly dawned on the man and to another question "with livid face and glaring eyes, he shouted 'No!'" Other letters were read and hideous things were dragged

from the slime, Wilde's frequent association with characters whose reputations were unsavory, certain ugly entertainments, odd presents given here and there, letters from the old Marquis to his son that were strange tangles of pathos and passion, and the upshot of it was that the Marquis was released and Oscar Wilde retired from the case, his mass attack a failure. But the sequel came swiftly. At the Cadogan Hotel, where Wilde was staying, the arrest was made, and Oscar Wilde was taken a prisoner to Bow Street charged with acts of gross indecency and on Saturday, April 6th, 1895, the poet, the playwright, the critic, the friend of the most fashionable and learned stood in the criminal dock. A youth named Alfred Taylor was charged with him and the magistrate committed both for trial, the Grand Jury finding true bills against both.

Like a flower wilting under the desert wind, Wilde had drooped. The court record speaks of his dejected air, his pallor, his dishevelled hair and his continual sighing. But there was one flash of the better Wilde, the Wilde whose faith was once pure and high. A poem, "Two Loves" was read, a poem by Lord Alfred Douglas.

"SWEET YOUTH,

Tell me why, sad and sighing, dost thou rove
These pleasant realms? I pray thee tell me, sooth,
What is thy name?" He said, "My name is Love,"
Thus straight the first did turn himself to me,
And cried, "He lieth, for his name is Shame.
But I am Love, and I was wont to be

Alone in this fair garden, till he came
Unasked by night; I am true Love. I fill
The hearts of boy and girl with mutual flame."
Then sighing said the other, "Have thy will,
I am the Love that dare not speak its name."

And the question was put by Mr. Gill, the Counsel to Wilde, "What is the Love that dare not speak its name?"

Then the better Wilde arose and said: "The 'Love that dare not speak its name' in this century is such a great affection of an elder for a younger man as there was between David and Jonathan, such as Plato made the very basis of his philosophy, and such as you find in the sonnets of Michelangelo and Shakespeare. It is that deep, spiritual affection that is as pure as it is perfect. It dictates and pervades great works of art like those of Shakespeare and Michelangelo, and those two letters of mine such as they are. It is in this century misunderstood, so much misunderstood that it may be described as the 'Love that dares not speak its name,' and on account of it I am placed where I am now. It is beautiful, it is fine, it is the noblest form of affection. There is nothing unnatural about it, and it repeatedly exists between an elder and a younger man, when the elder man has intellect, and the younger man has all the joy, hope and glamor of life before him. That it should be so the world does not understand. The world mocks at it and sometimes puts one in the pillory for it."

That was the high note of the trial, I think. I see at that moment the man in the wither-

ing atmosphere, the man with his vital powers depressed and enfeebled, gazing up to the heights where he once knew pure air and golden sunshine. I see the man thrust from paradise looking back through the open gates, fixing his eye for a last look on the delectable land knowing that henceforth he was to know naught of happiness, his sunset years to be spent with dark demoniac powers. Henceforth for him the sky was blotted out and the light had become darkness.

But hear the cry of the man himself. You may find the passage in *De Profundis*, the book he wrote when in prison:

"We are the zanies of sorrow. We are clowns whose hearts are broken. We are specially designed to appeal to the sense of humour. On November thirteenth, 1895, I was brought down here from London. From two o'clock till half past two on that day I had to stand on the center platform of Clapham Junction in convict dress, and handcuffed for the world to look at. I had been taken out of the hospital ward without a moment's notice being given me. Of all possible objects I was the most grotesque. When people saw me they laughed. Each train as it came up swelled the audience. Nothing could exceed their amusement. That was, of course, before they knew who I was. As soon as they had been informed they laughed still more. For half an hour I stood there in the grey November rain surrounded by a jeering mob.

"For a year after that was done to me I wept every day at the same hour and for the same space of time. That is not such a tragic thing as possibly it sounds to you. To those who are in prison tears are a part of every day's experience. A day in prison on which one does not weep is a day on which one's heart is hard, not a day on which one's heart is happy."

And again, the closing words in the same book run:

"All trials are trials for one's life, just as all sentences are sentences of death; and three times have I been tried. The first time I left the box to be arrested, the second time to be led back to the house of detention, the third time to pass into prison for two years. Society, as we have constituted it, will have no place for me, has none to offer; but Nature, whose sweet rains fall on unjust and just alike, will have clefts in the rocks where I may hide, and secret valleys in whose silence I may weep undisturbed. She will hang the night with stars so that I may walk abroad in the darkness without stumbling, and send the wind over my footprints so that none may track me to my hurt; she will cleanse me in great waters, and with bitter herbs make me whole."

That last was the hope of the man, a hope to be soon cruelly torn from him. For the springs of his own self were impotent and his was a strange incongruity between faith and conduct. Vainly he struggled with the spell coiling fatally around him for the fatal potency and weight of that inherited black drop of blood cruelly debased both heart and mind. For him there was to be no liberation but the liberation of death, and until that liberation came, between him and his fellows were set stone walls of separation, mountain barriers, chasms. Nor was there one to defy these and come near enough to deliver his soul from the depths of its own loneliness.

VII.

"SEBASTIAN MELMOTH."

The real Oscar Wilde died, I think, in the storm. It was but a pale ghost that was in prison and the ghost became Sebastian Melmoth, an exile in France. For that was the name he took to himself when he left England after his imprisonment. All that Nietzschean self-assertion of which we spoke vanished into thin air. The life he had once known seemed quite without solidity—a thing that suddenly vanished. It was as if he had been a creature living on a thin surface over a hollow void. He who had been King of Life, surrounded by applauding crowds, had become but as a dreaming beggar. I do not think that he wished to dream again.

In France, Ernest La Jeunesse met him and has left a picture of the changed man with his face furrowed by tears, his eyes hollow caverns, his heavy lips all compact of sobs and sometimes oozing blood. "An unwieldly ghost," he says, "an enormous caricature, he cowered over a cocktail, always improvising for the curious, for the known, and for the unknown—for anyone—his tired and tainted paradoxes. But mostly it was for himself he improvised; he must assure himself that he still could, still would, still knew." "He could talk as a stripling talks, smiling sometimes his smile that was of purgatory, and laughing—laughing at nothing, shaking his paunch, his jowls, and the gold in his poor teeth. . . . Slowly, word

for word, he would invent in his feverish, stumbling agony of art, curious, fleeting parables. . . . Words fail to paint properly the chaos of hope, of words and laughter, the mad sequence of half concluded sentences, into which this poet plunged, proving to himself his still inextinguished fancy, his battling against surrender, his smiling at fate; or to suggest the grim dark into which he always must turn, daily fearing death, in the narrow chamber of a sordid inn."

Like Napoleon, like Cola di Rienzi, like a hundred others with whom the Fates played. Wilde had drank a deep draft from the cup of glory, had known the intoxication of world admiration and, the debauch ended, had fallen into a mood of gloomy despair. Whoso warms himself at a conflagration must weep alone amid the ashes in the cold of night.

Andre Gide met him first in France, the friend to whom Wilde had once said that his error was that he had given his genius to his life, to his work only his talent. The place of meeting was a village near Dieppe. When Gide arrived, Wilde was absent, was not expected to arrive until midnight.

"Night came, and I went to the hotel, the only one in the place, where Melmoth, too, lodged. It was eleven, and I had begun to despair of my waiting, when I heard wheels. Sebastian Melmoth had returned.

"He was numb with cold. On the way he had lost his overcoat. A peacock's feather that his servant had brought him the day before may have given him a foreboding of ill-luck; he expresses himself as fortunate to have got off with only the loss of his overcoat. He shakes

with the cold and the whole hotel is astir to make him a hot grog. He scarcely has a greeting for me. He does not wish to show his emotion before the others. And my own excited expectation quiets down as I find in Sebastian Melmoth so completely the Oscar Wilde—not the hard, strained, forceful Wilde of Algiers, but the soft pliable Wilde of before the crisis. . . . We sat at table by lamplight, and Wilde sipped his grog. Now, in the better light, I note how the skin of his face has roughened and coarsened, and his hands still more, those hands with their fingers still covered with the same rings, even the lapis lazuli in its pendant setting, to which he was so much attached. His teeth are horribly decayed. . . . "

Of course, Melmoth drifted to Paris and to what Blunt called his "dog's vomit." He had the intention to finish a play commenced, a play of Pharaoh, but there was no longer will in him. His laughter had become funereal, his wit mere painful grotesqueness. He was a blasted thing much as Swift became a blasted thing, a tree not only dead at the top, but rotted throughout. He lived alone, gloomy, often drunk, with occasional flashes of the old Wilde that made his situation the more terrible. Gide tells how he met him in Paris:

"I heard myself called by name. It was Wilde. How changed he was! 'If I should reappear before I have written my play, the world will see in me only the convict,' he had said. He had returned without his play, and when some doors closed against him he sought entry nowhere else; he turned vagabond. Friends often tried to save him; one tried to think what was to be done for him; one took him to Italy. Wilde soon escaped, slipped back. Of those who had remained longest faithful to him, some had several times told me that Wilde had disappeared. Hence I was

I admit, a trifle embarrassed to see him again like that, in that place. Wilde was sitting on the terrace of a cafe. He ordered cocktails. I sat down facing him, so that my back was to those passing. Wilde noticed that and ascribed it to an absurd shame on my part, and not altogether, I regret to say, with injustice. 'Oh!' said he, 'sit down here, next to me,' and pointed to a chair by his side. 'I am utterly alone now.'

". . . A few days later I saw him again for the last time. Let me mention but one thing of those we talked of; he bewailed his inability to undertake his art once more. I reminded him of his promise, that he had made to himself, not to return to Paris without a completed play.

"He interrupted me, laid his hand on mine, and looked at me quite sadly: 'One must ask nothing of one who has failed.'"

And there the salient part of the Gide tale ends except for a few words about the funeral and the only floral piece laid on the coffin which bore an inscription, one from his landlord which read: "A mon locataire." It is not pleasant to think of the Lord of Life in that mad menagerie of the Paris underworld where are gross debaucheries, brutalities, hatreds, diseases and deformities. At the last, Sebastian Melmoth moved where the vile poison of the vilest human passions distilled and it is not well to think of it.

VIII.

THE SPITE OF THE GODS.

There was nothing at all silver gray and placid about Oscar Wilde's end although sentimentalists have tried to make it appear otherwise, talking about his submission to the yoke and his acceptance of the consolations of re-

ligion. Such talk is but chaff. There would be more truth in the saying that Wilde, in the days of sunshine, like Tantalus shared in the banquets of Olympus and wasted the ambrosia and nectar; could not endure his great prosperity and was swept by the gods to the everlasting shadow of the overhanging rock of sorrow; from the day of his release from prison he was wrapped in darkness and sat among the husks. True, his intentions were otherwise, his hopes doubtless were, for there is a ring of truth in that passage quoted from *De Profundis* voicing a yearning for some cleft in a rock in which he might hide, some secret valley in which to weep undisturbed. Free again, for him there was no windy, out-of-door life where brotherhood might be natural. He was the victim of the wrath of the gods. "If he had then begun a decent life," writes Wilfred Scawen Blunt in his diary, "people would have forgiven him, but he returned to Paris and to his dog's vomit." Harsh words, but truth is always harsh and Wilfred Blunt always truthful.

Sherard has a picture of the last days as told of by the landlord of the house in which Wilde lived. The man who had known the sunshine and honey of life, who had spent his days as a pampered pet of brilliant London society lived alone in his leaden sunset, his room a mean one, giving on a damp courtyard, his horizon a dank and dripping wall. A rickety table and a shabby couch and furniture faded and thread-bare were his all. "There he lay," said the landlord, "with ice on his

head, and in his delirium he swore at the pain. He kept raising his hands to his head to try and ease the torture. The doctors said that they ought to cut into the head but there was no sign to guide them where to cut, and so no operation could be tried. He must have suffered greatly for he swore and swore. And there he died—in my arms. It was two o'clock in the afternoon."

There were other things that the landlord told, as how Wilde, towards the end, used to work all night, beginning at one o'clock in the morning. "I have earned a hundred francs," he quoted Wilde as having said, but much of the money went for cognac and little for food. As for exercise, he took none, sleeping until noon, then breakfasting, to throw himself on the bed and sleep again until five or six in the evening. As I have said, the man had become a pale ghost.

So came the end and that final scene when he was received into the Catholic Church. In spite of the sentimentalists, there is no evidence that there was, for Oscar Wilde, any moment of that blessedness which is the supreme degree of happiness, any chimerical something better than happiness, any of that "perfect gladness" which Francis of Assissi calls the quintessence of happiness. Robert Ross, Oscar Wilde's most faithful friend, knew most of that last scene, so let him speak. The tale has been recorded by Blunt in his diary, an entry made on November 16th, 1905. Here it is:

"Yesterday I saw Ross, Oscar Wilde's friend, who was with him in his last hours. I was curious to know about these, and he told me everything. Ross is a good, honest fellow as far as I can judge, and stood by Oscar when all had abandoned him. He used to go to him in prison, being admitted on an excuse of legal business, for Ross managed some of Mrs. Wilde's affairs while her husband was shut up. He told me Oscar was very hardly treated during his first year, as he was a man of prodigious appetite and required more food than the prison allowance gave him, also he suffered from an outbreak of old symptoms and was treated as a malingerer when he complained of it. Ross's representation got attention paid to these things, and in the last eight months of his imprisonment Wilde had books and writing materials in abundance and so was able to write his *De Profundis*. I asked him how much of this was sincere. He said, 'As much as possible in a man of Oscar's artificial temperament. While he was writing, he was probably sincere, but his "style" was always in his mind. It was difficult to be sure about him. Sometimes when I called he was hysterical, at other times laughing.' When Oscar came out of prison he had the idea of becoming a Catholic, and he consulted me about it, for you know I am a Catholic. I did not believe in his sincerity and told him if he really meant it, to go to a priest, and I discouraged him from anything hasty in the matter. As a fact, he had forgotten all about it in a week, only from time to time he used to chaff me as one standing in the way of his salvation. I would willingly have helped him if I had thought him in earnest, but I did not fancy religion being made ridiculous by him. I used to say that if it came to his dying, I would bring a priest to him, not before. I am not at all a moral man, but I had my feeling on this point and so the matter remained between us. After he had been nearly a year out of prison he took altogether to drink, and the last two years of his life were sad to witness. I was at Rome when

I heard that he was dying and returned at once to Paris and found him in the last stages of meningitis. It is a terrible disease for the bystanders, though they say the sufferer himself is unconscious. He had only a short time to live, and I remembered my promise and got a priest to come to him. I asked him if he would consent to see him, and he held up his hand, for he could not speak. When the priest, an Englishman, Cuthbert Dunn, came to him, he asked him whether he wished to be received and put the usual questions, and again Oscar held up his hand, but he was in no condition to make a confession nor could he say a word. On this sign, however, Dunn, allowing him the benefit of the doubt gave him conditional baptism, and afterwards extreme unction but not communion. He was never able to speak and we do not know whether he was altogether conscious. I did this for the sake of my own conscience and the promise I had made."

There is another entry of interest:

"Wilde's wife died a year after he left prison. She would have gone to see him at Paris but he had already taken to drink and Ross did not encourage her to do so. Ross made 800 pounds by the *De Profundis*. He had intended to pay off Oscar's Paris debts with 400 pounds of it and devote the rest to the use of the boys, but just as he was going to do this the whole sum was claimed by the bankruptcy court."

I think you see in this last scene something like the paroxysms and wild graspings of a man who, in dim moments of consciousness sees the billows that go over him; you see in that upraised hand a reaching from the depths for a grasp to rescue him from his distress, from the quick closing darkness that filled his heaven and his earth. Seeing that, you will realize the strange haunting cry in that stanza of poem to L. L.:

But strange that I was not told
That the brain can hold
In a tiny ivory cell
God's heaven and hell.

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The books listed below are in cloth binding and can be secured from Haldeman-Julius Company, Clothbound Book Department, Girard, Kansas. The prices quoted include carriage charges.

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